

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child Protection is a broad term used to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In this document the term “child protection” applies to protection of children in international schools. ***Please note that this definition also includes harm to self.***

Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protecting students from harm (to self and from others) and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of students. It serves to create a safe and positive environment for children and to demonstrate that the school is taking its duty and responsibility seriously. This handbook considers that schools will provide appropriate child safety classes supported with a well-defined curriculum to increase children’s ability to understand abuse prevention.

Child protection concerns include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

Child Abuse - According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts. International school communities have unique characteristics of which school personnel must be aware in terms of the individuals who are around our children. School personnel should be knowledgeable of the potential reasons why children may not be able to talk about any victimization they might have experienced.

To increase the AISA community's awareness, this Handbook focuses on four main categories of abuse and provides basic information about the physical and behavioral signs associated with each type.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. (These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation).

Signs of physical abuse

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather

- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

Signs of emotional abuse

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

Signs of sexual abuse

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Vaginal or penile discharge
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding
- STDs
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression
- Regressive behaviors, bed wetting or stranger anxiety
- Excessive masturbation
- Sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting

- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior or language

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Some indicators of neglect

- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive
- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Long term impact of unmitigated child abuse

The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Some victims of abuse are resilient and thus manage to function and survive. Much research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and life-time health and well-being, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with the trauma.

The most important point to consider is that children often are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and suffer a myriad of symptoms. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential for long-term impact on the victims, and can affect the victim's ability to function as a human being. Abuse challenges the self-value, self-esteem, and sense of worth of its victims, rendering them hopeless, helpless and unable to live a complete life.

Long term impact of child abuse

- Poor educational achievement
- Inability to complete responsibilities
- Inability to live according to plan/ability
- Inability to care for self
- Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others
- Lack of self-confidence, prone to addiction
- Inability to express love / or accept love
- Inability to lead family, constant health problem

- Prone to mental health problems
- Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attachment difficulties
- Eating disorders
- Poor peer relations, self-injurious behavior (e.g., suicide attempts)

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some **early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders**:

Signs of offenders (students)

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities
- Does not stop sexual misbehavior when told to stop
- Uses force and coercion in social situations
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
- Socializes with children much younger
- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships

Signs of offenders (adults)

- Has “favorite” student or child
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about students/children
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on facebook/internet

****PLEASE NOTE THAT IN MANY COUNTRIES THE AGE OF DISCERNMENT IS AS LOW AS 9 YEARS. THIS COULD MEAN THAT OUR STUDENTS COULD BE ARRESTED FOR BEHAVIORS THAT INCLUDE HAVING SEX AND INTERNET/CELL PHONE SHARING OF PICTURES. IN SOME COUNTRIES IT COULD BE THE PARENT WHO IS ARRESTED.**